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U.S. Admits Arms Talks With Jordan and Others

Associated Press

The State Department's official spokesman yesterday reluctantly acknowledged that the United States is discussing the delicate question of arms supplies with a number of Middle East countries.

Press officer Robert McCloskey has been asked repeatedly about reports the United States is nearing agreement to supply the Arab kingdom of Jordan with arms to modernize its army. He also was asked regularly about the status of negotiations on Israel's request for U. S. arms, including tanks.

Though he has consistently declined to discuss these issues, McCloskey responded yesterday to a reporter's question on whether agreement had been reached on supply of additional arms to Jordan.

"There have been discussions with a number of Middle East states along the lines you suggested," he said.

Immediately flooded with more questions, McCloskey added that talks are "continuing," and revealed that countries involved are Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Iraq and Israel.

Newsmen were puzzled by the mention of Iraq. While Iraq received some military aid before the 1958 coup, no such U.S. aid was forthcoming after Iraq left CENTO (Central Treaty Organization). From then on, Iraq was supplied mainly by the Soviet Union, although it received some spare parts from Britain.

McCloskey later confirmed that discussions are going on with Iraq.